



April 2, 2024

The Honorable Representative Joseph M. McNamara
Chair of the House Education Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Oppose House Bill 7727 - Fairness in Women's Sports Act

The Mental Health Association of Rhode Island (MHARI) would like to express its opposition to House Bill 7727, known as the Fairness in Women's Sports Act. This bill proposes the organization of school sports teams based on biological sex, an approach that raises significant considerations regarding the mental health and inclusivity of transgender and non-binary youth within the educational system.

MHARI acknowledges the aim of ensuring fairness and equal opportunities in sports competitions. Inclusion in sports offers valuable opportunities for building self-esteem, developing social connections, and promoting physical health – benefits that should not be denied based on gender identity. We must highlight the importance of fostering a school environment that supports the mental and emotional well-being of all students, including those who are transgender and non-binary. Evidence indicates that these students are at a higher risk for mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, often exacerbated by experiences of exclusion and discrimination. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), transgender individuals are nearly 50% more likely to experience depression compared to the general population.¹ The introduction of measures that may restrict participation in youth sports based on biological sex poses a risk of further marginalizing transgender and non-binary students, potentially contributing to an environment where their mental health and sense of belonging are adversely affected.

MHARI urges the House Education Committee to carefully weigh these considerations. We advocate for a balanced policy framework that maintains the integrity of competitive sports while also safeguarding the mental health and inclusivity of every student. Engaging with educators, mental health professionals, and the LGBTQ+ community is essential in crafting legislation that reflects the diverse needs and rights of all students.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'FR', is located below the text 'Thank you for your consideration.'

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¹ <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/LGBTQ>